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MUSIC RULES

NONMUSIC CRASH MUSIC, MILLE PLATEAUX, MUSIC, SIGN, SIMULATION, ULTRABLACK OF MUSIC

Like advertising, fashion, and cinema before it, music rules today as a dominant ideogram of power. Not a reflection of a serious materialist power which emanates elsewhere and that precedes it, music is a real ruling laboratory of the age of sacrificial power. We are living today in the triumphant but desperate era of aestheticized recommodification. The simulational age of designer subjectivities where the commodityform most of all needs to be aestheticized to ensure its endless circulation through the debris of all the seductive objects of consumer culture. Here,

music as an empty force field through which all the fibrillated subjects pass, lends a momentary coherency to a system of objects that always threaten to collapse in the direction of entropy and burnout.

No longer only a simulation, music is now the key code of the postmodern body as a war machine. Music, then, as a force field through which processed subjects pass, with its privileging of pure speed, of sound approaching the velocity of light; with its vectoring of random subjects across a keyboard of outered emotions; with its inscription of the codes of frenzy and desire onto the body without organs; and with its fatal promise of pure inertia when the sound switches off and all the dancing bodies collapse. It is how postmodern bodies speak to one another, how they collude, conspire, and seduce. Here, the internal rhythms and grammatical codes of the war machine are transcribed into auditory codes that can only be seen with the ears and heard with the eyes.

And so, an interesting question arises. What is the relationship between the inertial grammatical codes of post-modern society as a war machine and the acoustical sounds of music? Crash music is not as much a representation en abyme of particular phases of culture, but it is one of the real world of political economy. Crash music exists as a culture smasher, a cultural cyclotron, in the era of crash economy. Which is to say that culture is not a reflex of political economy, but that society is now a reflex of key shifts in music theory and practice. Music rules in the quantum age because sound moves faster than the speed of light, thus quickly eclipsing history. Study music theory, then, as a laboratory of big transformations in power and economy. They will all have their punk period, their sampler phase, their house music era, their heavy metal economy, their rap aesthetics for the commodified body. And how does music serve as a laboratory of sacrificial power? In three ways:

1. By its cultural code, where music serves to energize the dead in an inert social field, replacing the history of the social body with nostalgia for a romantic invocation of the culture of sound.
2. By its method, where, when the energy is turned on, music as a force field activates the social in ruins, and then, when the energy switch is flipped off, the imminent catastrophe promised by postmodern culture finally occurs when the sound fades away into the disintegration of time.
3. By its presence as a cynical sign, where the representational phase of music exists only as a nostalgic sign of that which long ago ceased to be: the age of power with a real referent; of capital under the sign of use-value; and where if the real tactile bodies of musicians disappear into the simulational order of drum machines and samplers, it is because we are living now in the era of abuse-value, where music is interesting only when it is purely cynical – an empty sign of what it never was.

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